

CIVIL



RIGHTS



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News Letter

The coloured point of view (Argus, 11/6/77; Cape Times, 22/6/77)

In a recent statement Mr David Curry, deputy leader of the Labour Party, said, inter alia:

"The Government has stated long ago that it is opposed to race discrimination in South Africa.

By legalised discrimination we mean unequal treatment by the laws of South Africa of citizens on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin

If the Government is sincere in its statements then it has the power to remove discrimination, and there is no legal barrier to stand in its way

We draw attention to the following clear examples of legalised race discrimination affecting the citizens of South Africa whom we represent.

- 1) We have no participation whatsoever in Parliament
- 2) We have no participation whatsoever in the following decision-making bodies: Municipal, Divisional and Provincial Councils. We are merely consulted.
- 3) There is no parity of salaries regarding lecturers at the University of the Western Cape, teachers, doctors, civil servants, pensioners, etc.
- 4) The Group Areas Act is the worst example of race discrimination. There are approximately twice as many 'White' citizens as 'Coloured' citizens and the following facts regarding this Act speak for themselves. Since this Act started 115 741 families of all race groups had to be moved and out of this total only 1668 White families were resettled, but a total of 75 572 Coloured and Indian families were affected. In the Cape Province alone, 57324 Coloured families were moved and in Natal 26 990 Indian families were affected. Even in the administration of Coloured Affairs, White officials and the White Cabinet still have final decision-making power.

The policy of the present Government is to us therefore just plain White baasskap.

The Government must concretely and publicly by means of

legislation in Parliament show how all of us will participate effectively in the government of this country at all levels.

What we ask for is very simple: just citizenship for all South Africans regardless of race of colour or ethnic group."

A similar thoughtful and challenging statement has been made by Mr F.A. Sonn, President of the Cape Teachers' Professional Association. Says the "Cape Times", "In a properly ordered society Mr Sonn - or someone of similar calibre - would be a member of parliament, having a full share in political decision-making."

Freedom of choice

The Abortion Reform Action Group (ARAG) is campaigning for freedom of choice for every woman to have abortion on request up to the first three months of pregnancy. ARAG declares 1) that every woman has the right to seek medical help in the event of an unwanted pregnancy; 2) that every child born will be wanted and loved; 3) that our children's future will not be threatened by the population explosion.

Abortion is a highly contentious matter, which the League regards not as a civil right but rather as a matter of individual choice and conscience. ARAG is giving members who regard this freedom of choice as a human right the opportunity to say so. Their address is Box 11486, Vlaeberg 8018, and they are supplying forms for collecting signatures to a petition. Such forms must be returned to ARAG by August 1. Members within reach of our office (527 CTC Building, Plein Street, Cape Town) may sign the petition here if they so wish.

Commendable - but incomplete (Cape Times, 9/6/77, 4/6/77, 20/5/77)

The Railways have at last decided to allow all first class ticket holders to use the "whites only" section of the Cape Town railway station. We hope that the "Whites only" notices will now disappear and that all first class ticket holders will be admitted to all first class coaches. That would be a real step towards abolishing racial discrimination after nearly thirty years.

The Minister of Transport, Mr Lourens Muller, visualises the "eventual" disappearance of bus apartheid. Local authorities, he says, may apply to the National Transport Commission to change regulations locally. But the Administrator of the Cape has laid down that bus apartheid is to continue (with the help of a subsidy to the City Council from the Province) until a desegregated service has "the full support of the public".

pro. The duplication of services to maintain separation has infla-

ted the price of bus transport and, even apart from any other consideration, this should be a strong argument for restoring the pre-1948 position.

Says the "Cape Times", "It is a moot point whether the affront to dignity or the physical hardship caused to elderly or infirm passengers, who have often had to climb to the upper deck even when seats are vacant on the lower, is the more disagreeable feature of bus apartheid. Passengers of all races once sat together in buses; soon it seems they will be sitting together again, and what good has been achieved in the interim period of bus apartheid is beyond fathoming"

A crucial issue (Cape Times 4/6/77, Argus 11/6/77)

The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development has again declared categorically in Parliament that "no consideration was being given at present" to granting blacks freehold rights in urban areas.

If there is one step, above all others, which would help to promote peaceful change in the townships, it is this. It is interesting that it is among the changes recommended by Professor J.H. Moolman, Director of the Africa Institute and a "core" member of the Tomlinson Commission. "Those people who think more than 400 black townships can be shifted somewhere to the homelands are chasing rainbows," he said.

Vandalism and squatters (Argus, 117-18-22-28/5/77, Cape Times 1/3/77)

The April-May report of the Athlone Advice Office carries distressing details of action allegedly taken against squatters in the Everite (Kraaifontein) area by officers of the Stellenbosch Divisional Council. Residents (most of them illegally in the area) have reported to the Advice Office that during late January, February and early March this year not only were shanties demolished without notice, and the zincs removed by Stellenbosch Divisional Council workers under the inspectors responsible for the demolitions, but the piled belongings of the inhabitants were set on fire and destroyed. The people concerned are now trying to obtain compensation for their losses.

The destruction of the shacks may have been legal, although inhumane, but this further vandalism can have no moral or legal justification. We hope the Athlone Advice Office is successful in its efforts to obtain justice for the people concerned and that the Minister's attention has been drawn to this deplorable action (cf. his statement, Argus, 15/2/77).

After an appeal by some of the squatters, Mr Justice Die-mont ordered the Stellenbosch Divisional Council to re-erect the shacks of two appellants (Cape Times, 28/2/77) and a number of others have been re-erected since.

Compulsory citizenship - Transkei and Bophuthatswana
(Cape Times, 3/6/77)

When Transkei became independent, Paramount Chief Kaiser Matanzima stated that it was not the country's intention to force its citizenship on any Transkeians who lived at the Cape and preferred to remain citizens of South Africa. The South African Government, however, passed an Act by reason of which any Xhosa-speaking citizen connected with Transkei automatically became a citizen of the new country and lost his/her South African citizenship. This applied with particular severity to young men and women of Transkei descent who lived with their parents in, say, the Cape Peninsula and who, on reaching the age of 16, have willy-nilly become, in the eyes of the South African Government, Transkei citizens.

With the Status of Bophuthatswana Bill before Parliament, that country's Cabinet has sent a letter to the South African Government through its Commissioner-General, asking that it be read to Parliament. In the letter the Cabinet said that it was not prepared to "create Stateless people", and that those who did not wish to become citizens of Bophuthatswana must regain South African citizenship. They also wished for the consolidation of their territory, which would involve the granting of certain area to them by South Africa. They were not, they said, prepared to accept independence at all costs.

The Bophuthatswana Government commented: "The record of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, in its dealing with us on vital issues, is one that has caused us to be very bitter. We can no longer accept from that Department a verbal or written agreement. We want to be protected from what we know that Department to be capable of, by law passed by the South African Parliament."

It looks as though Bophuthatswana has learned something from the experience of Transkei.